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Small-Scale Agriculture Today

Office For Small-Scale Agriculture

SPRING 1989

Alternative Opportunities For U.S. Farmers

AT ISSUE ...RURAL LEADERSHIP

All aspects of American agriculture (national, state, and local) today-and in the future need topnotch leadership. During my tenure of nearly 7 years of service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, first as an Agency Administrator and presently as the Deputy Secretary, I have had the privilege of working with many excellent leaders. Whether they were professional or volunteer, their performance was and is critical to the success of Rural America, USA.

As a farmer for the majority of my working career, I worked directly with many topnotch rural and small town leaders. These folks, whether large or small-scale business people or producers, were quality individuals. They certainly rank among the highest in ability and performance and are able to make rural America today and in the future even greater.

America's farmers and rural communities provide not only the production network for our physical food and fiber products, but also much of the moral food and fiber for our country's basic value system.

In that regard there is another issue that we cannot overlook. The numbers of farm families in America are declining. We have arrived at a point in our history where many of our young people have no immediate relatives living on a farm. Therefore, it's likely that some new entrants into agriculture are neophytes.

Generally, such entrants farm part-time and are small-scale entrepreneurs. They are, however, the only group of farmers that is increasing in numbers. We should support and welcome these "beginners" into the agricultural community. More than ever before, these new people getting into agriculture, as well as those whose roots are deeply embedded in the soil of the commercial family farm, need guidance from many

sources. We should all be involved in providing that inspired guidance or leadership to these "new" agri-producers, be they large or small. Remember, the beginners of today are the source of our local and national leaders of tomorrow. (Comments of Peter C. Myers, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, January 25, 1989)

TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

Waste Management through Composting - Diversify your farm operation by composting agricultural by-products with food industry, fisheries or yard waste. For a copy of the \$15 report "Composting Fish By-Products: A Feasibility Study", contact - Dawn W. Genes, Time & Tide RC&D, U.S. Route 1, Box 12, Waldoboro, ME 04572. Telephone (207) 832-5348.

Strawberry Baskets - Results following precooling and storage of berries at 34 degree F for 48 hours plus 60 degrees F for 24 hours indicate there is less moderate and serious bruising and decay in berries packed in Styrofoam cups than those packed in plastic mesh cups. Contact - William R. Miller, USDA-ARS, SSA Horticulture-Research Laboratory, 2120 Camden Road, Orlando, FL 32803. Telephone (407) 897-7325.

Peach Trees Bear in Second Year - Field plantings of peach trees raised from small plant shoots in the laboratory by tissue culture techniques bore 10 times more fruit in their second year than conventionally grafted trees; i.e. 285 peaches per tree, compared with 33 peaches on trees from standard stock. Contact - Freddie Hammerschlag, USDA-ARS, PSI, PMBL Room 118, Building 006, BARC-W, Beltsville, MD 20705. Telephone (301) 344-4286.

Out-of-doors - European seedless cucumber production is possible "out-of-doors" in areas where summer night temperatures exceed 55 degrees F for 3 months and producers can erect a screencloth covering for isolation from pollinating

insects. Windscreens are also recommended. Contact - Don J. Makus, USDA-ARS, South Central Family Farm Research Center, Booneville, AR 72927-9214. Telephone (501) 675-3834.

Tax Changes - Careful study of tax law changes during 1988 can pay dividends for agricultural producers engaged in tax planning. Contact - Ashley Lovell, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Route 2 Box 1, Stephenville, TX 76401. Telephone (817) 968-4147

Peaches Threatened - Maybe! "In British Columbia, Canada, as much as 40 percent of the peaches are marketed locally, through the hundreds of fruit stands one sees along the roads. But the balance are hard to get rid of at a profitable price. Growers speculate this will get worse, as a result of the free trade agreement with the United States---George Ing." (Good Fruit Grower, January 15, 1989, p.16).

Publications - All State Cooperative Extension Service provide publication listings. One good listing "Extension Publications" can be obtained from Ohio. Contact - James Crepe, Publications Office, Cooperative Extension Service, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044. Telephone (614) 292-1607.

Best Taste and Color - Enthusiasm for the wonderful tastes and colors of unique varieties of vegetables and flowers (including edible) is soaring. Home gardeners and small farm marketers, for example, seek selections of European vegetable varieties. To obtain an interesting free catalog, contact - Renee Shepherd, Shepherd Gardeners, 6116 Highway 9, Felton, CA 95018. Telephone (408) 334-5311.

Exotic Livestock - Ostriches, llamas, water buffalos, and where's the beefalo? These and several others are found in the January, 1989, "A Small-Scale Agriculture Alternative Exotic Livestock." For a copy, contact - Bud Kerr, USDA-CSRS, OSSA, Suite 342-D Washington, D.C. 20251-2200.

Accidents - They happen; do you know what to do? Costs \$4.50 to get a copy of "First on the Scene" a new bulletin on how to respond quickly and effectively to farm accidents. Contact - Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Services (NRASE), 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. Telephone (607) 255-7654.

TIP - Horticultural Subjects - Some of the best informed people on horticultural subjects are those belonging to a garden club. There is a constant flow of ideas from fellow members and from "experts" who speak to members.

Exotic Fruits and Vegetables - An encyclopedia cookbook that is both clear and concise about America's new produce, Uncommon Fruits and Vegetables: A Common Sense Guide. Costs \$26.95 includes postage and handling, payable to

Elizabeth Schneider, 215 East 80th Street, Apt. 8H, New York, NY 10021.

Garden Check - A bimonthly newsletter for home gardeners provides tips on lawn care, treatment for common plant diseases and insect pests, planting, fertilizing and pruning schedules, and much more. The cost is \$5.00 for one year subscription. Make check payable to the University of Delaware "Garden Check". Contact - Bob Mulrooney, Townsend Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19717-1303. Telephone (302) 451-1125.

TIP - April 15th - Sign at entrance to Tax Bureau: "Watch Your Step" and at the exit "...Watch Your Language." (Press, December 31, 1988, p.4).

Social security information about Social Security (SS) benefits is available at no charge from local SS offices; check your local telephone directory for the correct telephone number. If needed, you may call the toll free number 1-800-234-5772.

Goosegrass - It is found throughout the Southeastern U.S. and is considered one of the 10 worst weeds worldwide. One variety is resistant to usual herbicide control. "Twenty years ago, there was no herbicide resistance in weeds. Now there are more than 200 cases, and in virtually every major crop." (The Cotton Gin & Oil Mill Press, October, 1988).

Flowers in the Supermarket - The International Flower Bulb Center of the Netherlands reports that shipments of Dutch flower bulbs to the United States are up by 59 percent since 1980, with a steady annual growth rate of 9 percent. Also, why are packaged rose sales gaining? Perhaps the reason is the action of the United States Congress last year in voting the rose bush as the official National floral emblem. (Produce News, October 15, 1988).

New Transplanter - A tree transplanter that can be mounted on a pickup truck with the capacity of transplanting 3" to 4" diameter trees is now available. Contact - Big John Tree Transplanters, 5611 S. Calhoun Road, New Berlin, WI 53151. Telephone 1-800-643-8039.

Viability of Seeds - Longevity of well-stored seeds of common vegetables is different. Some examples:

- 1 year - Sweet corn, onion, okra, parsnip, parsley
- 2 year - Beet, pepper, leek
- 3 year - Bean, carrot, lettuce, pea, spinach, tomato
- 4 year - Cabbage, radish, squash, turnip, pumpkin, kale
- 5 year - Cucumber, watermelon, muskmelon, endive

Remember: Good seed is essential! (New York State Vegetable Growers Assoc. Inc., Fall 1988, p.14)

Surge Irrigation - By alternating water between sets of 10 or 20 rows, the method gives water time to soak in. Result: the same yield from less water. Contact - Bobby A. Stewart, USDA-ARS, Conservation and Production Research laboratory, P.O. Drawer 10, Bushland, TX 79012. Telephone (806) 378-5724.

American Tea - It is being grown and processed in South Carolina. Write for more information. Contact - Mack Fleming, Charleston Tea Plantations, Inc., P.O. Box 12810, Charleston, SC 29412. Telephone (803) 559-0383.

Stomach Cancer - "Eating garlic and onions may significantly reduce the risk of stomach cancer, according to a study of nearly 1,700 Chinese published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute." (The Sun, January 18, 1989).

Kiwifruit - An estimated 8.6 million tray equivalent of California kiwifruit is expected to be picked for the 1988-89 season according to the California Kiwifruit Commission. That is up about 10 percent from last years 7.8 million tray equivalents.

Cowpeas - A legume high in nutrient content, 23 to 33% CP, 73 to 80% TDN, could become an alternative crop for fattening lambs in the hot summer months. Two years of feeding have shown gains equal to concentrate-oat hay drylot fed lambs. Contact - Helen A. Swartz, Lincoln University, 900 Moreau Drive, Jefferson City, MO 651010. Telephone (314) 681-5530.

TIP - World Population - Know how many people there are in this world? "Population broke the 5 billion mark just this past year and is expected to top 5.1 billion this year--growing at a rate of 242,000 people every day. That's 88 million a year! By 2050, the middle of the next century, population may be approaching 11 billion." (Southeast Farm Press, October 5, 1988, p. 2).

Using Sludge as Fertilizer - Sewage sludge can provide a natural way to fertilize crops and add organic matter to the soil. Best of all, it is a very cheap fertilizer source. Contact - Art Peterson, 354 Soils, Dept. of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI 53706. Telephone (608) 262-2631.

Growing Our Own Jobs - This 60 page guidebook (\$5.00) is a publication on agricultural diversification. Contact - National Association of Towns and Townships, 1522 K Street, N.W., Suite 730, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 737-5200.

Seafood - The updated brochure "Maryland Seafood Packers List" is available free. Contact - Noreen Eberly, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Seafood Marketing Office, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD. 21401. Telephone (301) 841-5770

ON THE GO

The USDA Office for Small-Scale Agriculture (OSSA) participated in the National Direct Marketing Conference and Farm Conference '89 held in Oakland, California, February 2-5, 1989. OSSA presented an overview of promising small farm public programs around the country in a workshop session; and there were 70 more workshops with national speakers. There were market tours, on-farm visits and a trade show for a gathering of people from many parts of America with a common cause and concern. Using the words that described one presentation, participants were "probing the underlying values that offer hope for sustainable family farm agriculture in America."

OSSA was also involved in the Colorado Organic Producer's Association (COPA) Annual Meeting, Boulder, CO, February 25, 1989, Colorado Farmer's Market Association Annual Conference, Denver, CO, February 28, 1989; and the Small or Limited Resource Farmer's Western Regional Conference (NM, CO, TX and AZ) Albuquerque, NM, March 13, 1989.

AS IT HAPPENS

"Diversified small farms may, in fact, be one of the best places to look for the new ideas needed to return farming to health. Small farms produce only a tiny fraction of the major commodity crops, and they don't therefore, add to our debilitating agricultural surpluses nor to our national debt, since they are largely unsubsidized. They provide fresh, healthful, sometimes unusual foods, which the farmers often distribute directly to consumers or to produce markets. Small farmers, just as Thomas Jefferson would wish, tend to own their farm acreage rather than to rent it. They pollute less with agricultural chemicals and cause less erosion with farm machinery. Their farms are an aesthetic asset, especially when near metropolitan areas. And they improve local economies in all regions." (Charles E. Little "Capital Ideas", Harrowsmith, July/August 1987).

AGRICULTURE CENSUS

Durwin Knutson, former intern with the Office for Small-Scale Agriculture from April 1988 until January of this year and author of the Directory for Small-Scale Agriculture, is with the Data Requirements and Outreach Branch, Agriculture Division of the Census Bureau, Department of Commerce.

WE NEED YOU

Please continue to provide OSSA with input on topics, technologies and events of importance to the small-scale farm audience. The address is noted below. Telephone (202) 447-3640. DIALCOM-AGS 3023. FAX (202) 447-2497 to Bud Kerr.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 9-12, 1989 - "Income Opportunities for the Private Landowner Through Management of Natural Resources and Recreation Access," Oglebay Park, Wheeling, WV. Contact - Dean Belt, Townsend Hall, University of Delaware, South College Ave., Newark, DE 19717-1303. Telephone (302) 451-8934.

April 10, 1989 - "First Annual Conference Maryland Herb Association." Meeting held at the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Lower Level Conference Rooms, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401. Contact - Desiree Mundell, telephone (301) 841-5770.

May 3-5, 1989 - Shiitake Mushrooms: A National Symposium and Trade Show. Ramada Hotel, St. Paul, MN. Contact - Cathie Bergum, Extension Special Programs, University of Minnesota, 405 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108. Telephone (612) 625-2787.

May 27, 1989 - Third Annual Baltimore Herb Festival will be held from 10 am to 6 pm, in Leakin Park just off the Baltimore Beltway. Contact - 2301 Pickwick Rd., Baltimore, MD 21207. Telephone (301) 448-0406.

June 3-4, 1989 - Herb Fest (the second largest in the nation) Herb Hollow, East Otto, NY 14729. FREE - 10am-5pm daily, rain or shine. Telephone (716) 257-5105.

June 21-23, 1989 - Small or Limited Resource Farmer's Regional Conference (NC, VA, TN and KY). North Carolina A&T University, Greensboro, NC. Contact - Dana Froe, OAE-USDA, Room 1226 S. Bldg., Washington, DC 20250. Telephone 1-800-543-1289.

June 25-29, 1989 - National Association for the Specialty Food Trade. 35th Annual International Fancy Food and Confection Show. Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA. Contact - Ron Tanner, 215 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003. Telephone (212) 505-1770.

July 22-25, 1989 - HERBS 89, Int'l Herb Growers and Marketing Assoc. 4th Annual Conference, Red Lion Inn, San Jose, CA. Contact - Maureen Buehrle, Exec. Dir., P.O. Box 281, Silver Springs, PA 17575. Telephone (717) 684-9756.

July 25-27, 1989 - Small or Limited Resource Farmer's Regional Conference (GA, SC, FL and AL). Fort Valley State College, Fort Valley, GA. Contact - Dana Froe, OAE-USDA, Room 1226 S. Bldg., Washington, DC 20250. Telephone 1-800-543-1289.

(Mention of commercial enterprises or brand name does not constitute endorsement or imply preference by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

USDA/CSRS/SPPS

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